



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
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### **Utah Department of Health Announces New Program to Connect People with Affordable Prescriptions**

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – Imagine the frustration of going to the doctor, receiving a prescription to help you get better, but finding you just can't pay for the medicine. In Utah, 6.4 percent of people encountered this problem in the past year, according to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) 2001 Health Status Survey. To address this problem, the UDOH is launching a new resource, RxConnect Utah, to connect people with programs to get affordable prescriptions.

Fortunately for Utahns, Senator James Evans listened to the stories of these families while walking District One and meeting the people he represents. Prescription drug coverage was a daily concern for many families. As a result, Senator Evans sponsored Senate Bill 140, requiring the UDOH to implement a new program to address these issues. "I've seen many hardworking families struggling to get the prescription drugs they need," says Senator Evans. "Senate Bill 140 was made law during a lean budget year, showing this program is a priority for Utah." Senate Bill 140 appropriates \$65,000 to the Utah Department of Health for this program to support administration, outreach, and salaries. Partners, including the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and pharmaceutical companies, have also contributed resources to this program.

RxConnect Utah will serve as a clearinghouse of information, connecting people who qualify with free or reduced cost medicine offered through pharmaceutical companies. RxConnect Utah, accessed by a toll-free phone number and website, will serve as an information, resource, and referral service to help the public access resources to get the medicine they need. "We are excited to be able to offer another resource to help Utahns access health care," says Dr. Scott Williams, Executive Director, UDOH. "Connecting

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Utahns with prescription drugs helps them take care of their overall health, preventing the development of chronic conditions and reducing health care costs.”

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, U.S. spending for prescriptions tripled between 1990 and 2001. Between 2000 and 2001 the cost of prescription drugs grew more quickly than physician services or hospital care. Those who do not have prescription drug coverage may leave conditions like high blood pressure and heart disease untreated, resulting in more costly treatment later. For the 8.7 percent of Utahns who have no health insurance or who currently lack prescription drug coverage under Medicare, RxConnect Utah will be a valuable resource to help them access the prescription drugs they need. RxConnect Utah works in coordination with the Medicare drug bill, and serves Utahns regardless of their age.

RxConnect Utah connects people with programs offered through pharmaceutical companies. Eligibility for assistance varies by pharmaceutical company, but all programs consider health insurance status and income. The UDOH is conducting outreach through local pharmacies to let the public know about this new resource. According to Senate Bill 140, Utah pharmacies are required to let the public know about RxConnect Utah.

People who need help getting prescription drugs can call 1-866-221-0265 (toll-free) or visit [www.health.utah.gov/rxconnectutah](http://www.health.utah.gov/rxconnectutah) for information. RxConnect Utah is supported by a partnership including pharmaceutical companies, the AARP, and resource and referral experts.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*